

Family characteristics of 6- to 12-year-olds

The family environment in which a child lives affects many aspects of that child's life, including school performance. For example, research has shown that family characteristics, such as parents' educational attainment, number of children in the family, family income, and mother's employment status, are related to student achievement. Data on such family characteristics may help policymakers and educators to apply resources efficiently and to develop programs designed to increase learning.

- The educational attainment of parents of 6- to 12-year-olds increased substantially between 1972 and 1997. For example, the percentage whose mothers completed at least high school increased from 66 to 84 percent, while the percentage whose fathers completed at least high school rose from 65 to 85 percent (see supplemental table 36-1).
- The employment rate of mothers of 6- to 12-year-olds increased between 1972 and 1997, rising from 39 percent in 1972 to 66 percent in 1997. The employment rate of fathers decreased slightly from 93 percent in 1972 to 91 percent in 1997. Despite the increase in mothers' employment, median family income (in constant 1997 dollars) remained relatively stable between 1972 and 1992 and increased between 1992 and 1997 (see supplemental table 36-1).
- The percentage of 6- to 12-year-olds who lived with only their mother doubled between 1972 and 1997, increasing from 12 to 24 percent. Conversely, the percentage who lived with two parents decreased from 87 to 71 percent during the same period.
- In 1997, 6- to 12-year-olds had fewer other children in their household than their peers in 1972. For example, in 1972, 71 percent of 6- to 12-year-olds had two or more brothers or sisters, compared with 46 percent in 1997.

Percentage distribution of 6- to 12-year-olds, by selected family characteristics: 1972-97

Selected family characteristics	1972	1977	1982	1987	1992	1997
Mother's highest education level						
Less than high school diploma	34.3	29.5	23.6	20.4	18.0	15.8
High school diploma or GED	47.6	47.4	48.0	45.9	38.8	34.8
Some college	10.8	13.4	16.5	18.9	26.1	28.8
Bachelor's degree or higher	7.2	9.8	12.0	14.8	17.2	20.5
Percentage of children whose mothers were employed	38.5	45.5	52.1	58.1	61.2	66.4
Percentage of children whose fathers were employed	93.1	91.0	88.9	90.3	89.1	91.2
Family type						
Two-parent household	86.8	81.2	77.1	74.9	72.8	71.4
Father as head of household	1.0	1.2	1.8	2.4	3.0	4.2
Mother as head of household	12.3	17.6	21.1	22.7	24.1	24.4
Number of other children in household						
0-1	28.8	46.4	50.1	52.3	53.5	54.5
2-3	46.7	40.8	41.0	40.8	39.8	39.5
4 or more	24.4	12.8	8.9	7.0	6.7	6.1

NOTE: The Current Population Survey (CPS) questions used to obtain educational attainment were changed in 1992. See the supplemental note to *Indicator 59* for further discussion. Information on parents' educational attainment, employment status, or age of mother at child's birth is available only for those parents who live in the same household with their child. See the supplemental note to this indicator for further discussion on how the data were calculated.

In 1994, the survey instrument for the CPS was changed and weights were adjusted. See the supplemental note to *Indicator 51* for further discussion. Percentages for employment status were based on the total population, not just those in the labor force. Details may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

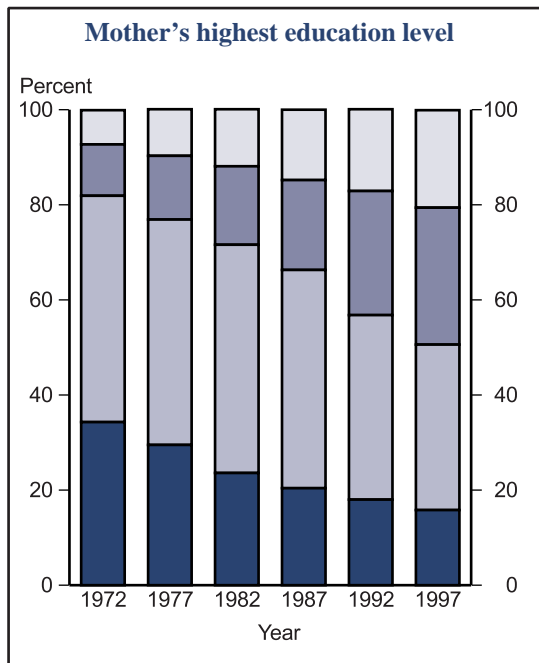
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, March Current Population Surveys.

Table S36 **Standard errors for the text table in *Indicator 36***

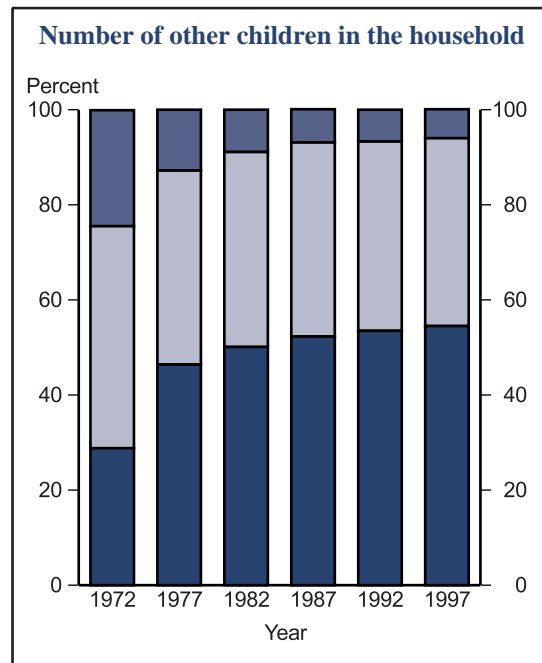
Selected family characteristics	1972	1977	1982	1987	1992	1997
Mother's highest education level						
Less than high school diploma	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
High school diploma or GED	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Some college	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Bachelor's degree or higher	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4
Percentage of children						
whose mothers were employed	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Percentage of children						
whose fathers were employed	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3
Family type						
Two-parent household	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6
Father as head of household	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3
Mother as head of household	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6
Number of other children in household						
0-1	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
2-3	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
4 or more	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census,
March Current Population Surveys.

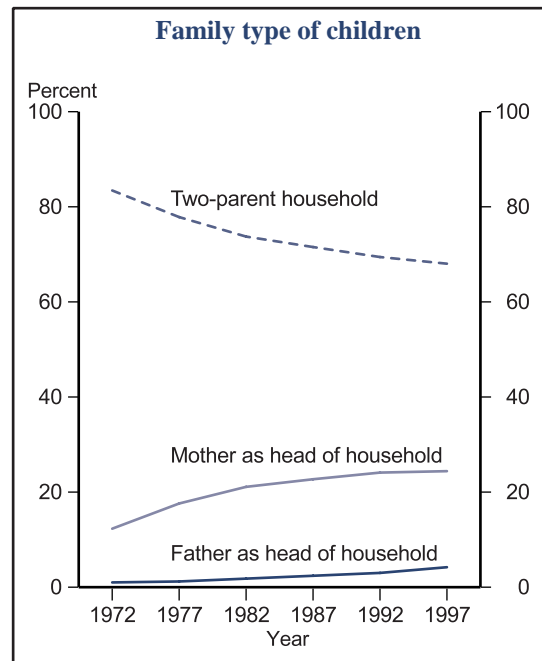
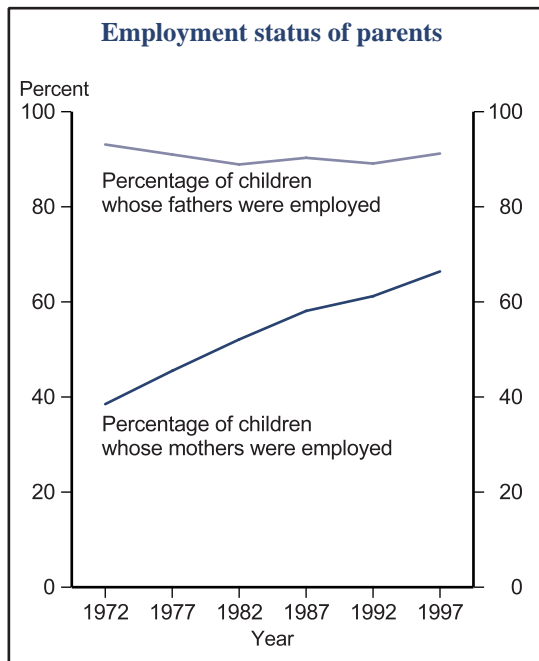
Percentage distribution of 6- to 12-year-olds, by family characteristics: 1972-97



■ Less than high school diploma ■ High school diploma or GED ■ Some college ■ Bachelor's degree or higher



■ 0-1 ■ 2-3 ■ 4 or more



NOTE: The Current Population Survey (CPS) questions used to obtain educational attainment were changed in 1992. See the supplemental note to *Indicator 59* for further discussion. Information on parents' educational attainment, employment status, or age of mother at child's birth is available only for those parents who live in the same household with their child. See the supplemental note to this indicator for further discussion on how the data were calculated.

In 1994, the survey instrument for the CPS was changed and weights were adjusted. See the supplemental note to *Indicator 51* for further discussion. Percentages for employment status were based on the total population, not just those in the labor force.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, March Current Population Surveys.

Table 36-1 Percentage distribution of 6- to 12-year-olds, by selected family characteristics: 1972–97

Selected family characteristics	1972	1977	1982	1987	1992	1997
Race-ethnicity of child						
White	79.4	77.0	74.2	71.0	70.0	66.3
Black	12.7	13.9	13.8	14.6	14.5	14.9
Hispanic	6.5	7.3	8.9	10.8	11.2	13.9
Other	1.4	1.7	3.0	3.7	4.4	5.0
Mother's highest education level						
Less than high school diploma	34.3	29.5	23.6	20.4	18.0	15.8
High school diploma or GED	47.6	47.4	48.0	45.9	38.8	34.8
Some college	10.8	13.4	16.5	18.9	26.1	28.8
Bachelor's degree or higher	7.2	9.8	12.0	14.8	17.2	20.5
Father's highest education level						
Less than high school diploma	34.9	28.7	21.4	18.0	14.9	15.3
High school diploma or GED	36.9	36.7	37.9	37.4	35.2	31.4
Some college	12.0	14.6	17.7	20.2	23.8	25.1
Bachelor's degree or higher	16.2	20.0	23.1	24.4	26.1	28.2
Mother's employment status						
Employed	38.5	45.5	52.1	58.1	61.2	66.4
Unemployed, looking for work	2.7	4.1	5.9	5.2	5.0	3.9
Not in labor force	58.8	50.4	42.1	36.7	33.8	29.7
Father's employment status						
Employed	93.1	91.0	88.9	90.3	89.1	91.2
Unemployed, looking for work	3.5	4.2	6.8	5.1	5.9	3.7
Not in labor force	3.5	4.8	4.3	4.6	5.0	5.1
Family type						
Two-parent household	86.8	81.2	77.1	74.9	72.8	71.4
Father as head of household	1.0	1.2	1.8	2.4	3.0	4.2
Mother as head of household	12.3	17.6	21.1	22.7	24.1	24.4
Number of other children in household						
0–1	28.8	46.4	50.1	52.3	53.5	54.5
2–3	46.7	40.8	41.0	40.8	39.8	39.5
4 or more	24.4	12.8	8.9	7.0	6.7	6.1
Age of mother at child's birth						
Under 20	10.6	12.1	13.7	12.6	10.8	9.1
20–24	33.2	35.2	35.0	32.3	30.7	25.1
25–29	26.8	27.8	30.1	33.0	31.3	32.2
30 or older	29.5	24.9	21.1	22.1	27.2	33.6
Median family income (in constant 1997 dollars)	\$41,449	\$41,014	\$37,671	\$39,715	\$39,733	\$40,598

NOTE: The Current Population Survey (CPS) questions used to obtain educational attainment were changed in 1992. See the supplemental note to *Indicator 59* for further discussion. Information on parents' educational attainment, employment status, or age of mother at child's birth is available only for those parents who live in the same household with their child. See the supplemental note to this indicator for further discussion on how the data were calculated.

In 1994, the survey instrument for the CPS was changed and weights were adjusted. See the supplemental note to *Indicator 51* for further discussion. Percentages for employment status were based on the total population, not just those in the labor force. Details may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, March Current Population Surveys.

Table S36-1 Standard errors for table 36-1

Selected family characteristics	1972	1977	1982	1987	1992	1997
Race-ethnicity of child						
White	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7
Black	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Hispanic	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5
Other	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3
Mother's highest education level						
Less than high school diploma	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
High school diploma or GED	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Some college	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Bachelor's degree or higher	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4
Father's highest education level						
Less than high school diploma	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4
High school diploma or GED	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.5
Some college	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5
Bachelor's degree or higher	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Mother's employment status						
Employed	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Unemployed, looking for work	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Not in labor force	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Father's employment status						
Employed	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3
Unemployed, looking for work	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2
Not in labor force	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3
Family type						
Two-parent household	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6
Father as head of household	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3
Mother as head of household	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6
Number of other children in household						
0-1	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
2-3	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
4 or more	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3
Age of mother at child's birth						
Under 20	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4
20-24	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.6
25-29	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.7
30 or older	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7
Median family income (in constant 1997 dollars)	—	—	—	—	—	—

— Not available.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, March Current Population Surveys.

Family characteristics of 6- to 12-year-olds

Data on family characteristics of 6- to 12-year-olds were taken from the March Current Population Surveys (CPS). Information about parents was obtained by linking parents' records with their children's records using common variables, such as household ID, parent ID, spouse ID, and person IDs at various steps.

The March CPS is a hierarchical data file with three levels of information: household, family, and person level. Some information used in this indicator, such as family income or family type, was obtained from family level and then retained/passed on to the person level. Before the merging process began, an extract file which included information from both household and family levels was created for each individual (at the person level). In the merging process, three temporary data sets were created using the extract file: heads of household, spouses of the head, and children in the household. Records for head of household were first linked to records of spouses of heads of household to create one file of parents' records containing information for both parents. Finally, the children's records were merged with the parents' records using common codes between the files, such as household ID, parent ID and person ID. This merging process allowed information such as parents' education level and parents' employment status to be linked to children's files.

Family type

Information on family type, which originated at the family level, was taken from the parents' records and was then linked to the children's records. The original family type categories were "husband and wife family," "male head," and "female head." When the parents' information was merged with the children's records, these categories changed to "both parents," "father as head of household," and "mother as head of household," so that family type was in reference to the child rather than the parent.

Age of mother at child's birth

For this analysis, the age of the mother at her child's birth was computed by subtracting the child's age from its mother's age. Only children whose mother was in the household were included in the analysis.

Number of other children in the family

Number of other children in the family was calculated by adding the total number of children in each family, and then subtracting one (for the child in reference) from the total.

Mother's or father's highest education level

A parent's highest education level was obtained by merging the information from parents' records with the children's records. The percentage distribution of mother's and father's highest education level was calculated based only on children who live with their parents. For example, the percentage distribution for mother's highest education level was calculated based on children who live with "both parents" and who live with "mother only." For children who live with only their father, their mother's education level was unknown; therefore, this "unknown" group was excluded for this particular section.

Employment status of parents

Information on the employment status of parents was computed similarly as that for the parents' highest education level.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, March Current Population Surveys, unpublished tabulations.